

(January 24th.)

## The Call of Our Land.

BY PROFESSOR JAMES W. ROBERTSON, C.M.G.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club, on the subject: "The Call of our land," Prof. J. W. Robertson said:

*Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club,*—I could wish at this moment that I had better acquired the art of compression and expression, for, it will require both to speak adequately upon this large subject within the space of half an hour. I am reminded of an instance of the finest combination of compression and expression which I heard recently when in the States. I was, at the Outing Club in New York City on an occasion when friends of the two men were discussing the respective records of Cook and Peary. The records were long and the field was extended. After the discussion had continued for some time one member gave expression to a statement which seemed to all to sum up the situation very well. He said, "Poor Cook is a gentleman and a liar. Peary is neither." Now I hope nobody will try to define me after I am through.

This land of ours in its great out-of-doors calls for our thought, our care and our service, apart altogether from our ordinary occupations. I was born on a farm, bred on a farm, and settled on a farm in Ontario thirty-five years ago, so you will give me credit for knowing something about what I am talking of when I say that rural conditions call for wise action on the part of the Canadian people. So far as the call of the land is answered with intelligence the land will abundantly repay the individual. And this is common to the province, the Dominion and the whole Empire. No man ever took care of the land intelligently and industriously but mother earth rewarded him abundantly.

---

Professor J. W. Robertson is one of the foremost authorities in Canada on agricultural questions. He was Professor of Dairying at the Ontario Agricultural College, 1886-90; first Dairy Commissioner for the Dominion, 1890; first Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying, 1895-1904; Principal of the Macdonald College at Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, 1904-10. He resigned this position recently in order to make a study of methods of conservation adopted by the various countries of Europe on behalf of the Canadian Commission of Conservation of which he is a member.

We have our aspirations for ourselves as a people and as a race, but no matter how wide the sweep of man's thought, we must come back sometimes and gaze anxiously over the complexion of some baby's eyes. There is nothing, after all, to touch the study of nature. The call of the land asks that earth be made a better home for the children "for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Maybe, after all, earth and Heaven are not so far apart as we used to think.

Who knows the land? Men think of it as a red patch on the map. We're not a patch. The land signifies homes, where men love, and men hope, and men hate, and have their way. I think of any spot on the globe. I drop my thought on any locality. It is somebody's home. That's the place. That is how it appeals to me.

We have a grand country here in Canada. Half a continent is its area. That's worth while. It extends one-sixth of the way round the globe. That's also worth while. If the area of the whole of Europe equalled eleven, then we are twelve. That's something to think about.

We are young in this land. We have opportunity. We have power. These things are in the present. Let the forests be swept by fire and it will take a long time to bring back wealth to the hillsides. There is the call of the surface of mother earth. After all, her crust is not very thick. Men of brains with instruments have attempted to solve this. The average scientific imagination of the experts of Germany, France and England say that the crust is about as thick as the Island of Montreal is long. So Light Point would be where it is hot and Macdonald College where the snow bounds. Creation is not finished. It is still in the making. We are doing our part, or should be doing our part. It is ours to till the land, garner the crops, and build the homes for future generations of mankind.

From the Atlantic inwards for one thousand miles the land is dotted with apple trees and clover blossoms. Think around a minute. You will find that in all land, including Eden, it was not a bad thing to have apple trees. We talk much of the land of the West. But think of the orchards of the East. Think of the homes of the East, with their happy children and women with red lips. We may admire the West, but that part of our country where homes are numerous and contented must be the predominant part of Canada.

Then we have the reservoir of rainfall. Nature has arranged for us the great watershed north of Lake Superior,

whence pours the refreshing succor to the fertile fields below. The great western plains are stored with wealth on their surface. If our people, prompted by greed or ignorance, rake off the top and leave the land poor, how shall we account to prosperity? It may be all right to use our coal, with men devising instruments to capture the sun power direct, and harness the waterfall. It may have served its term in the rotation of civilization. The West needs to be conserved by being used well in the now. That man gets the biggest crop who maintains the best land. Then we have five hundred miles of magnificent mountain lands, with their valleys, fertile with fruits and wheats, and their hills pregnant with mineral and precious metal.

Yet that is not our best inheritance. It is the great heritage which we didn't acquire without earning the title. It is wealth in humanized form. It is the comforts of the sidewalk, of things that men made and things that men have power to make, that are the better things. We have at our disposal the accumulated service of the ages. We have a heritage in ideas and ideals. It is by these that a nation lives. Man does not live by bread alone.

Contemplating all these things we may well ask ourselves whether we are playing our own part like men. Are our people matching their great opportunities? This is the task which confronts us of the present, it is the big problem of the now. It is a task that is alike an aspiration and a destiny.

Custom and convention are things that we have inherited and not invented. We have our schools and our system of self-government, and we are happy. We owe a lot to the little place called England, England owes a lot to that little place called Scotland. And they owe a heap to Ireland. Irishmen are, after all, only improved Scotchmen. I may tell you that there are only three peasantries in the world that begin to compare to the peasantry of Judea. There are the peasants of England, sturdy fellows, who in the time of Elizabeth builded the foundations of our vaunted institutions for human liberty. We have in our blood that of our dominant ancestors, those rulers who dominated things by intelligence. Then there are the peasants of Scotland who never did or never could see any future for a boy if it meant escaping hard work. That's Scotland's contribution to civilization, illuminated and glorified by sentiment. There are spots which have enriched the blood of her men, and the enriching of their blood has enriched my own. Men become great as Nations grow, they are purified through suffering.

And then there is old Ireland. There we have the poetic and the tragic, the regal and the poverty-stricken in the same person. There are the O'Haras and the O'Neills, the kings of Ireland, not broken down gentry, but representing the persistent life of the dominant race.

We touch the three spots in our national life. It is our inspiration. Methinks, sometimes, that it were possible for the kingly common people to have produced more men like Christ. It is the greatest of aspirations, the holiest of ambitions, to develop the best in self, the best for the race and the largest glory for the divine.

We in Canada are trustees of a great inheritance. It is ours to conserve and to enhance for future generations and other people. The special stress is on us now. Our business is not restricted to a back corner. We have a great untravelled street to open up and develop. We are but a week from Europe and two weeks from the Orient. We are young, hopeful, strong and abundantly rich. It is ours to influence history for ten years to come. Canada must prove itself worthy of its duty and worthy of its riches.

We are doing a good deal in farming. On thirty millions of acres we have taken five hundred millions of humanized wealth out of chaos. This was not done by tricks. The rain, the soil and the sunshine had a lot to do with it. It pays our bills as a nation. It pays the bills for what I buy from other folk. Exports figured last year that for every \$100 in this country the fisheries yielded \$5, the manufactures \$12, the mines \$15, the forests \$16, and the farms \$52.

We are reaping larger crops from ever widening fields without making anyone poorer. Take it in Ontario alone. In a period of ten years the Ontario Agricultural College and its allied work has yielded Ontario farms an increase in oats alone of 18.9 per cent. and in barley of 23.4 per cent. There is much talk of technical education these days. God-speed to it. But we want technical education and industrial education for the farmers. The Dominion and the Provinces are spending in the effort to develop industrial education the sum of \$2,300,000, towards which Ontario's share is \$747,000. Statisticians in the United States have ascertained that for every dollar spent upon the land the farmer reaps annually an additional \$20 in crops. That's a good investment.

Let us answer the call of the land with intelligent labor. That is the only kind of answer the earth respects. You can't trick her into returns. We shall gain in intelligence, in indus-

try and in social well-being in thus making for increased efficiency.

There is another call of the land to which I would allude for a moment. It is the call to the recognition of partnership. Partnerships must exist when many occupy and use the same estate. We must be just to the future generations by leaving the land unimpaired and improved by our business administration. Partners may differ, but they cannot be enemies. Rivalry must not be hostility. And this applies as much to business and to politics as it does to the football field.

Sometimes city men give the impression that they are willing to put up with the farmers. Then they may be permitted to shut up without the farmers. Let me tell you that there are three mothering occupations, a trinity that accomplishes the upbringing and development of a nation. There is farming—the gathering of food and flowers and wealth out of Nature—the making of homes and the teaching of children.

I would make a plea here for more toleration and more appreciation. I have lived in Quebec for five years. I know more of the life of the people of Quebec than I did when I went there, more of the intrinsic qualities of that life. Sometimes I think our judgment is based too largely upon appearance, upon prejudice. There is a difference between apples, to take a homely illustration which appeals to me. And the difference is not always in appearance. There is a difference between the sour old crab and the macintosh red, isn't there? But the main difference is not in the skin of the two apples. It is in the quality of the life in the sap. That is what really counts. And I am going to tell you, in all honesty, that the quality of life in the blood of the boys and girls of Quebec is quite a match for your own. I have learned much in Quebec and from Quebec. I have learned how much the French of Quebec are doing to enrich Canadian life.

Now don't be afraid that I am going to talk religion. You think, perhaps, I am getting upon thin ice. Don't be alarmed. I am a Presbyterian elder. I remember once when I was travelling between Guelph and Toronto. A man was on the train, wearing a suit of clothes with a large check, who talked with a decided burr. He had, in some manner, lost his ticket. There was an argument, and then some more argument. The conductor finally became irritated and annoyed. There was quite a squabble. The man, I should say, was experiencing just a little trouble to keep his equilibrium. Finally he broke out: "I don't care, because anyone could see that I'm a Scotchman, a Grit and a Presbyterian. That ought to be good enough to carry a man without a ticket."

I could tell you, and perhaps at some length, if my time was not nearly up, much that I have learned from religions which were not at all like that in which I was brought up. There is, perhaps, too much that is narrow about us in the way we view this great question. Surely it is littling and belittling to the Almighty to claim that our particular form of religious worship is the only channel adequate to permit Him to reveal Himself to anyone. We can generally learn a little bit from the other fellow, too.

Then there is the call for the appreciation of the new-comer. We have a great responsibility in the new-comer. Think of it for a moment. He means much to our land and to our people. He may enrich or he may debase our civilization. It is his to a large extent to make or mar. There is need for a continual exhortation to all of us. We must stand by our own citizenship, and all it means, and seek to bring him up that way. This is a land of liberty and respect for law. We are proud of that fact, at least we say so, and we ought to be. This is a land of respect for law. Keep it such. This is the glory of our country. Others may have more riches or claim other distinctions. But we stand for the respect for law. It is worth while. It is worth retaining. So do not forget our duty to the new-comer.

Once more, we must see to it that we provide and maintain the chance for the children. Thus only can we keep our country growing greater and better. There is no nostrum that can prove so potent a prescription for progress in our national life as providing a plan of education adequate to our best life. It is our duty to provide the best chance for the children. We should seek to conserve the love of labor. I have an abounding faith in the efficacy of manual labor, healthy, hearty manual labor, not drudgery. Every boy, until he is 14 years of age should not be confined to his books too long. Give him a chance at manual labor. Let him rejoice in having done things. Enable him to realize something of the divine in beholding his workmanship and seeing that it is good.

We should seek to inculcate in our schools the habit of happiness, the joy of doing delightful things. Be a bit more practical. Aim to conserve the best that is and to contribute our quota towards the future. Let us do our best to help our fellow man and the Lord will look after making him good.

There is the call of the land for liberty. It is ours to welcome the foot of the friend and to resist the progress of the aggressor to the last half-inch. We are the daughter in the house of our mother, but mistress in our own. This is true

in the very widest conception of the thought. Ours is a part of the promised land of the earth, and we, into whose keeping it has been entrusted, may say to all folks that we are mistress in our own house. We welcome the German, the Swede, the French, the new-comer from Hungary or Spain, and all other folks. Our association in building up the great new country, in answering the call of the land, will be of mutual profit. But we have a trust. We are trustees of a great estate. Ours is the trust of our own seas. We are the loyal and loving daughter in the house of our mother, and mistress in our own. Lets stand by that.